History

of

Historic Hill Union Church

1731 — 1953

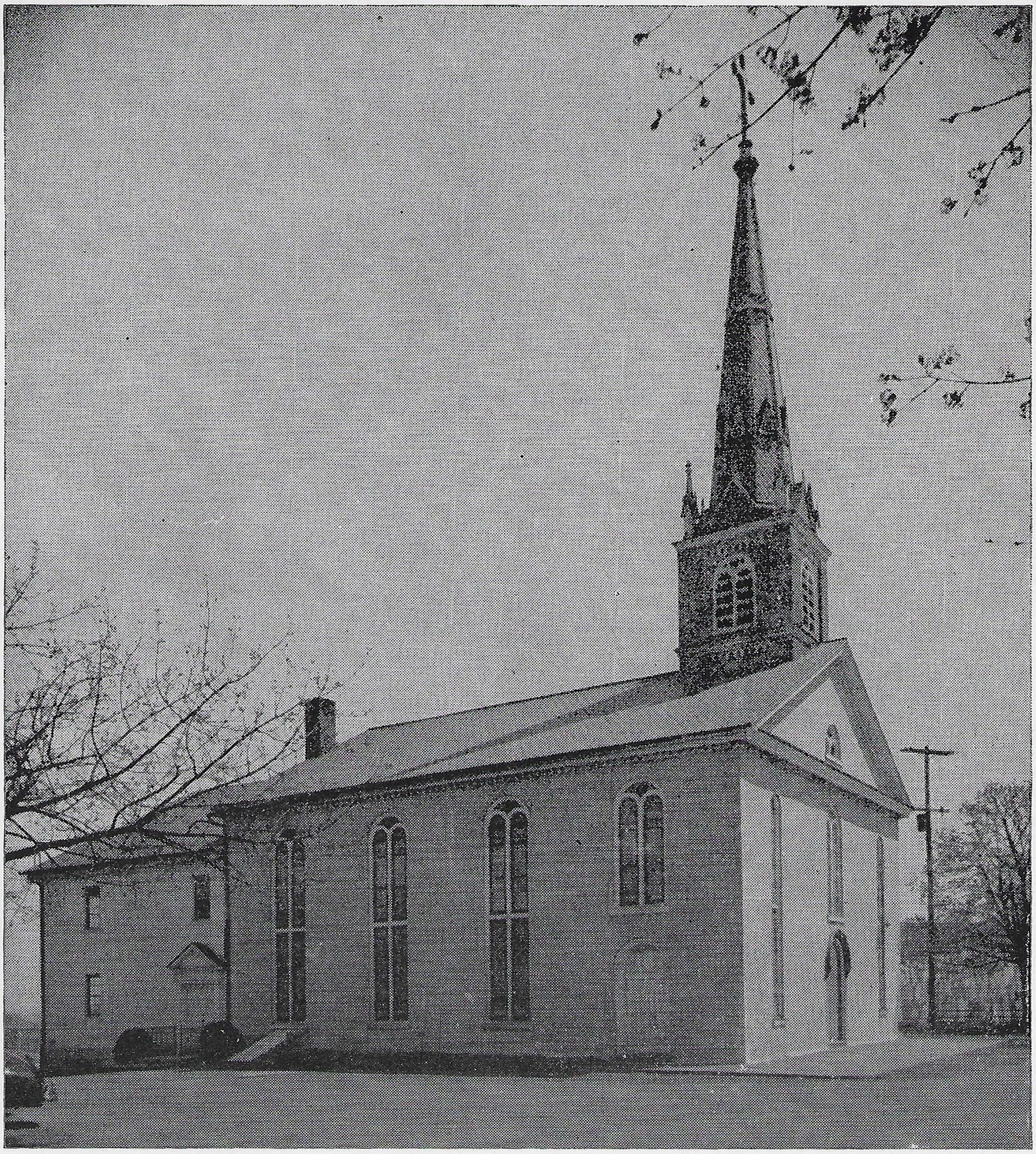
In the Oley Hills of
Berks County, Pennsylvania

Dedicated to those early pioneers of the Church who so firmly laid the foundation of this Sacred Temple for generations yet unborn.

By

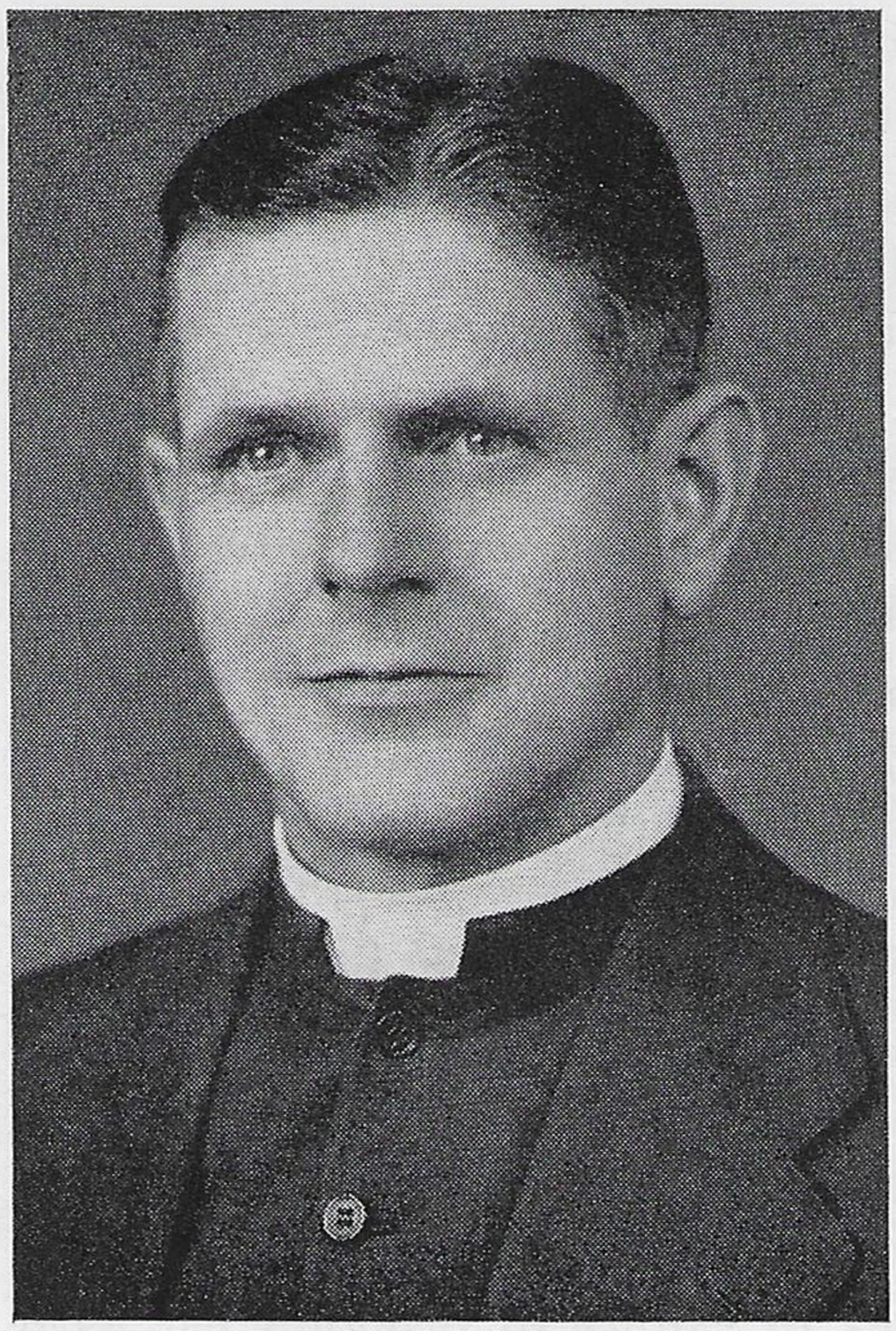
CHARLES W. ECKERT, SR.

1953



HILL UNION CHURCH — PIKE TOWNSHIP
BERKS CO. PENNSYLVANIA

First Church.....Built 1747
Second Church.....Built 1786
Third Church .....Built 1853
Third Church.....Renovated 1953



REV. LUTHER LEE LENGEL

Graduate of Muhlenberg College
Class of 1925

Mt. Airy Theological Seminary
Class of 1930

Ordained 1930

Serving St. Joseph Hill
Lutheran Church since 1942

REV. JOHN L. HERBSTER

Graduate of Franklin and Marshall
College—Class of 1925

Theological Seminary of
Reformed Church of U.S. 1928

Ordained 1928

Serving at St. John Hill
Reformed Church since 1943

This church was known originally as Willow Valley (or Weidenthal) later as Corn Church due to an extension placed on the church for the storage of corn. Later known as Oley Mountain Church and today it bears the name of Hill Church.

This beautiful yet simple temple dedicated to God, of early colonial design rises majestically under the great canopy of heaven. Amid the glittering rays of the noon day sun and the twinkling evening stars and is a rare spectacle to behold.

Its beginning can be traced from the records of the Falkner Swamp Church, New Hanover, Pa. These records are dated more than three decades prior to the birth of our first president of these United States, George Washington.

It stands today peacefully and in sublime silence in the Oley Hills as it has stood for well over two centuries, during storm and strife and in peace and war.

Through its portals have passed thousands of those who have received the holy covenants of baptism, confirmation, communion, marriage and the final submission of the body in death. Also those who sought refuge from their arduous labor to spend a quiet hour of worship on the Sabbath day.

Although more than two hundred years of its service to mankind has been rolled in the great gulf of the past. We who love the courts of the Tabernacle can look back upon the gracious bearing of our Master for his unlimited kindness during these many trying years.

"Though the money changers must be expelled from the Temple, yet will Jehovah preserve and purify it from sacrilegious pollutions of the wicked."

In 1728 John Casper Stoever, theology student and his son a missionary arrived in Philadelphia. The work outlined for them in this land of promise, was to organize congregations and to establish and build churches.

Although Reeds Church (Little Tulpehocken) near Stouchsburg, Pa., had been built in 1727 by an immigration of Germans from the Schoharie Valley, New York, it appears to be the first Lutheran Church in Berks County that John Casper Stoever served.

To trace the actual beginning of Oley Hill Church is practically an impossibility due to records not being properly maintained from its actual beginning.

Apparently it is one of the oldest churches in Berks County and the state. In the Halle Nach. Volume I, page 415 this statement is found: "Oley, where a beginning was made in 1704." This statement indicates that the Lutheran Church was active in this vicinity long before any records of the church were kept.

It has been established that there were several Lutheran settlers in this section between the years 1700 and 1710. It is supposed that Daniel Falckner and Gerhard Henkel who preached at Germantown, New Hanover (also known as Falckner Swamp), Manatawney and other places ministered to the people in the Oley Hills during this time. Records show that Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg came to this section of the country quite frequently.

The forming of a congregation and the building of a church in the Oley Hills had been considered possibly as early as 1710 by those early pioneers, some who

worshiped at and held membership in the Falckner Swamp Church. Various difficulties were encountered, although prayer services were conducted occasionally in the various homes or barns, by the visiting pastors or missionaries, prior to the building of the church in 1747.

We can form some idea of the difficulties encountered in the early days in the Oley Valley from various religious denominations when consideration was given to forming a new congregation or the erection of a church.

You will recall that the Hill Church records show that the tract of land for the church was purchased August 12, 1741, although the erection of the church was not started until the year 1747. The delay of six years between the purchase of the land and the erection of church thereon may have been due to the "great religious awakening in 1742" in the Oley Valley.

We note in the early part of the year 1741 Count Ludwig Von Zinzendorf left his native Moravia, bound for America, to endeavor to establish a firmer foothold for the Moravian Church in America. Up to the year 1741 his church had not accomplished the progress he had anticipated.

Bethlehem (Pa.) having been founded in the early part of 1741 and Count Zinzendorf having arrived in that year, was present at the Christmas Eve vigils when Bethlehem was so named. The Count having heard of the steady influx of German settlers in the fertile Oley Valley and had also heard of the progress made by other religious denominations, immediately arranged to go there in the early part of 1742. He possibly thought that this might be an ideal location to establish the chief center of the Moravian Church in America.

Being a very forceful speaker and dominant figure in the Moravian interests, he proceeded to establish a school in 1742 near Oley. His next move was to endeavor to unite all German religious bodies in closer fellowship. Andrew Eschenbach was sent to the Oley Valley by Count Zinzendorf as a missionary for the Moravians arriving here in October 1740. Eschenbach preached during the year 1741 with power and conviction. From all indications he did not make the progress which Zinzendorf had expected.

Count Zinzendorf and the members of his party immediately proceeded to organize the various sects and denominations. This attempt was made at a meeting called by the Count to be held at Johann DeTurk's home in Oley February 9, 10, and 11, 1742.

We find that at this meeting the Count advocated the election by lot, which declared Jonathan Herbein and Frantz Ritter elected. Jonathan Herbein however protested vehemently, stating that he was not capable nor qualified of filling such a high office of stewardship, although he later accepted.

At a later conference held in the spring of the same year, at Germantown, Herbein parted with Zinzendorf. Herbein wrote a long letter in reply to Zinzendorf's request to state his position on religion. The letter shows Herbein's outstanding ability and also sheds the light on the confusion and disruption of the Moravian movement in Oley. Herbein later returned to the fold of his native Reformed Church.

Although men fled Europe to have religious freedom here in America, it appears that Zinzendorf was not much in accord with some of the other denomina-

tions. His very actions on various occasions portray his temperament of religious individualism.

Indian attacks and disturbances were also experienced by some of the church goers in the earlier years of the church. Records show that it was customary at times to carry a gun while going to church, for protection against such attacks.

I have endeavored to sketch a brief outline of religious history in this locality in order to show that establishing and building a church in those early pioneer days was not accomplished without real hardships.

RECORDS OF THE CHURCH

The (Oley) Hill Church Record is a large ledger shaped volume, leather covered, 14¾ x 6 inches in size, which has 399 pages, some of which are blank. It covers the records of the Church for the years 1754-1799. The records are still in a state of good preservation at the present time (1953) and are kept in the Library at Mt. Airy Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Much of the data used in this history has been taken from this record.

In the original records of the congregation we find the following:

Philadelphia 12th August 1741.

Received of Casper Crygher. Georg Ernst and Andreas Rodenheffer two pounds ten shillings, in part of the consideration for 50 acres of land to be surveyed to them for the use of a Lutheran Congregation, as a burial ground, adjoining the Lodewick Fellinger and Daniel Yoder tracts near Colebrookdale Township in the County of Philadelphia.

For the Honorable Proprietaries
Lynford Lardner,
Rec. Gen.

These are to certify that the above is a true Copy of the Original Receipt, compared and exactly agreeable according to the whole content.

Witnesses present:
HENRY MUHLENBERG
JACOBUS BUSKIRK
JOHN LESHEY
JOSEPH VON SARDORIUS

The receipt shows that on August 12, 1741 the Evangelical neighbors in the Oley Mountain purchased from the then Secretary Lynford Lardner fifty acres of land for a church and school.

We find that in the year 1747, the Evangelical Lutherans started to build a block church. With the assistance of members of neighboring denominations, who very graciously lent their help to prepare the timbers and erect the log church. Then in sublime silence these pioneer brethren reared the sacred Temple. It was a neighborly gesture of love and good will.

A request was made by the members of the Reformed faith that they be permitted to bury their dead on the cemetery adjoining the new church and also be

permitted to send their children to our proposed school when erected. As a further evidence of appreciation they permitted the Reformed the privilege of holding services in their church provided they were conducted by a regular pastor and not an imposter or a tramp. The records show that the school house was erected in 1750 on a part of the 50 acres of Church property at the following cost:

The foundation wall cost 1 pound 1 shilling
The iron stove cost 3 pounds 1 shilling
The windows cost 1 pound 7 shillings
The nails cost 1 pound 15 shillings
The boards cost 2 pounds 9 shillings
Table and supplies cost 3 pounds

This old log school house was torn down in 1786 and a stone building was erected in its place. This building was maintained and used as a school until 1850 when a public school was erected by the school directors of the township. A portion of the original building is still used as the residence of the sexton of the church to this day.

The following is also found in the records and has been translated:

Today August 12, 1764 in the presence of the entire Church Council it was decided that two keys be made for the Church Chest.

Deacons	*Elders*
Johannes Gerber	Jacob Müller
George Schaller	Michael Hartlein
	Conrad Bohm
	Tobias Scholl
	Friedrich Meyer
	Tobias Maug
	Johannes Reitenauer

One of these keys was for the Deacons and the other for the Elders. The chest was no doubt that part of the altar in which the sacred vessels and wine were kept.

In 1785 the first log church became too small due to the rapid growth of the congregation. The church was also becoming dilapidated due to 38 years of continuous use.

Half of the interests of the church was now sold to the German Reformed Congregation. This was regarded as the duty by the Lutherans as a matter of Christian love, also for the promotion of the Kingdom of Christ in America. From this time it was designated as a Union Church.

During the year 1786 the old log church was demolished and the larger and more spacious structure of stone was erected. The architect and builder was Jacob Gerber. The building committee consisted of John Hoch, Lutheran and Conrad Meyer, Reformed.

In May, 1804 dedication services were held for an eight-stop pipe organ which was built and installed in the church by Mr. Dieffenbach. This organ was used until 1916, or 112 years before it was replaced by a new one.

During the year of 1829 the General Assembly of Pennsylvania passed a special act authorizing the Secretary of this Commonwealth to issue a patent to the

Lutheran and German Presbyterian Congregations share and share alike for this particular land. A peculiarity about this transaction is the fact that the land was taken up by the Evangelical neighbors in 1741, that the Lutherans erected a church upon the ground in 1747, used an acre of land for school purposes in 1750, sold one-half of the property to the Reformed Congregation in 1785, and yet had no deed or claim to the property themselves. The only deed ever issued is the one conveying the ground to the Lutheran and German Presbyterian Congregations share and share alike. (See Act of Assembly, 1829, page 8.)

By 1852 the second church building, which had served its purpose for 66 years, became inadequate due to the continuous growth of the congregation. It was decided to remove the old building and erect a new and more spacious church of stone. A contract was let to Mr. Frank S. Ebling of Muhlenberg township for the erection of the new church, which was to be 50 x 60 feet in dimension, for the sum of $3950. This did not include the removal of the old church building. The old structure was torn down by members of the congregation and much of the material used in rebuilding. The corner-stone was laid on Whitsunday, May 15, 1853. In 1886 it was remodeled and a steeple and bell added. Although this building is still in use in the early part of 1953, major repairs are approved and under advisement by authority of the joint Church Councils at the present time.

In connection with the laying of the corner-stone, May 15, 1853, we find the following record:

"The said congregations have agreed upon the following articles, which are to be observed for all time to come as the rules of this church:

1. It is to be called the St. Joseph's Church in Pike township.

2. Its object is to secure the members of the preaching Gospel of Christ and the use of the holy sacraments as well as to facilitate the performance of these Christian duties by which the Redeemer's kingdom may be successfully advanced —each congregation being entitled to the use of this house for worship one-half the time.

3. There is to be but one key to the church, which is to be kept at an appointed place under the direction of the Church Councils.

4. The Mennonites shall be permitted to bury their dead, on the cemetery, to hold funeral services in the church, and to preach therein on other occasions should they so desire.

5. For the alms collections, as well as for all other revenues, there shall be one treasury, in which the congregations shall share equally.

6. We still adhere to the old Evangelical Lutheran and German Reformed Synods, and only ministers who have been regularly called and ordained shall be permitted to preach in this church. But we do not wish to be placed under any arbitrary enactments of any synods, and we shall at all times regard ourselves as free and independent of such compulsory law.

7. Our desire and prayer is to have the word of God always preached in its fulness and purity in this church, and to have the holy sacraments administered in accordance with the unaltered Augsburg Confession on the part of the Lutherans and in accordance with the Heidelberg Catechism on the part of the Re-

formed. For, with our pious and sainted Fathers we confess the old and ever unchangeable truths of the Gospel, and we will have nothing to do with false doctrines and sectarianism.

8. In all matters due notice having been given, a majority of votes of each congregation separately taken shall decide. The minority yielding to the majority.

The above could readily be classed as the "Eight Articles of Hill Church." From general observation they are unbiased and complete, and governing to this day.

The following "Rules governing the Lutheran Congregations" were also presented in 1853.

The officers shall consist of one pastor, six elders, and six deacons, whose duties shall be prescribed by the Constitution of the Lutheran Church.

Quorum

A majority of the officers regularly assembled shall be a quorum for the transaction of business.

Elections

Every communicant member in good regular standing shall be entitled to vote at all elections. Elders and deacons shall be elected for three years, and shall serve until their successors are elected and installed.

Amendments

The By-Laws may be altered or amended by a majority vote of the qualified voting members present at a meeting called for that purpose, provided that at least two weeks previous notice of the meeting shall be given from the pulpit."

After the erection of the new church and its dedication in 1853, an additional feature presented itself for the benefit of the members of Hill Church.

About this time a church was organized in Bechtelsville to provide a place of worship for the members of Hill Church, who without any conveyances, found it a hardship to attend the mother church. Also to encourage the residents of Bechtelsville to greater activity in the church. It was a Union Church and assisting the Lutheran and Reformed members were also Mennonites, who aided both in gifts and their labors. It is a part of the records that many years ago the Reading Conference formed a parish, which included Hill Church, Lobachsville, and Bechtelsville, however, this parish was never consummated.

On March 30, 1887, it was decided that only those persons who have contributed to the support of the pastor, during the year immediately preceding and having regularly communed, shall be permitted to use the church and ground for burial purposes. All others shall pay one dollar ($1.00) for the use of the church and four dollars ($4.00) for a grave.

The following Lutheran Pastors are supposed to have visited and attended to the people during the years as shown:

Rev. John Casper Stoever.....1731-1734
Rev. H. M. Muhlenberg.....1742
Rev. Lucas Rauss.....1752 to 1757
Rev. William Kurtz.....1757 to 1758

The regular pastors were as follows:

Rev. J. H. Schaum	1758 to 1771
Rev. J. M. Schmidt	1772 to 1777
Rev. Frederick A. Muhlenberg	1778
Rev. Henry E. Muhlenberg	1779
Rev. Daniel Lehman	1780 to 1782
Rev. Christian Streit	1782 to 1785
Rev. J. F. Weinland	1785 to 1789
Rev. J. C. Dill	1791 to 1797
Rev. F. W. Geissenhainer	1797 to 1798
Rev. Jacob Miller	1808 to 1821
Rev. Conrad Miller	1821 to 1852
Rev. Nathaniel Iaeger	1852 to 1857
Rev. H. Wendt	1858 to 1861
Rev. E. H. M. Snell	1861 to 1862
Rev. A. D. Croll	1863 to 1868
Rev. Simon R. Boyer	1869 to 1873
Rev. D. K. Humbert	1874 to 1890
Rev. H. W. Warmkessel	1890 to 1930
Rev. John W. Koch	1931 to 1941
Rev. Luther Lee Lengel	1942 to

In 1905 the exterior of the church, including the steeple, was painted by August Conrad for the sum of $100.00.

During the year 1912 the church was refrescoed, and an up-to-date steam heating system was also installed. The re-dedication services were held on October 14, 1912. This celebration was attended by more than 1000 people and several hundred persons could not gain admission to the church.

Rev. E. E. Bachman, rector of the Mary Drexel Home and Philadelphia Motherhouse of Deaconesses, addressed the gathering in German. His text was Matt. 9:1-8. Several other visiting pastors also addressed the audience on this occasion. On July 27, 1912, an order was given to Edwin Krause for a new pipe organ, same to cost $1700.00, this organ was installed in 1916 and dedicated on July 30th, of the same year.

On March 29, 1913, the new addition to the cemetery was opened, which was consecrated in 1914. An iron fence was erected around the old cemetery during the same year.

After the close of World War I, the joint congregations erected a monument in memory of the young men of the congregation who made the supreme sacrifice, and those who returned. Two hundred maple trees were also planted as a Memorial Grove. This dedication took place on September 21, 1919. A pavilion with a seating capacity of 500 was erected in the grove a few years later.

Electric lights were installed in the church and residence in 1921 and the residence renovated in 1923.

The new Memorial stained glass windows with storm glass protection were installed in the church in 1925.

During the same year the entire outside of the church was painted. A copper cross was placed on the church steeple at the same time.

On December 21, 1930 Rev. J. W. Koch was installed as Pastor of this church.

The two-hundreth Anniversary of St. Joseph's (Hill) Lutheran Congregation was celebrated on August 16, 1931. An address of welcome at the morning service was made by Prof. Alvin F. Kemp, County Supt. of Public Schools of Berks County. The sermon was by Rev. N. R. Melhorn, D.D., editor of "The Lutheran." At the afternoon services the Devotional Service was conducted by Rev. Paul J. Dundore, Amityville Parish.

The sermon (German) by Rev. W. L. Meckstroth, Hill Reformed congregation. Sermon (English) by Rev. W. H. Kline, President of the Reading Conference.

Through the generosity of the Sunday School and its liberal contributions the church was able to acquire another pipe organ which was dedicated September 15, 1935. There were gifts also from members and friends of the congregation; such as the Altar Cross and candles in August 1942, the Memorial Vases in December 1942, the Mistle stand, and the Altar service book in April 1943. Other innovations constituted the introduction of the Duplex envelope system and the rotating church council in January 1943. The purchase by the church council of the gown and stole for the pastor which were used for the first time in October 1945.

In the latter part of 1948 some consideration was given to the repair of the church and the erection of a parish house. Plans for the complete renovation of Hill Church were drawn up by Rev. Ellerslie A. Lebo of Millersville, Pa. The plans of this remodeled building were to maintain the colonial lines of the original church.

A meeting was held on January 6, 1949 by the joint congregations for the purpose of accepting these plans. The plans were accepted at this joint congregational meeting by a vote of 92 to 16.

Mr. Charles M. Talley was employed as architect by the joint Church Councils. After having received some favorable bids on the proposed addition and renovations, reported subsequently at a joint congregational meeting held on Sunday, April 17, 1950, at 2:00 P.M. when it was voted 73 to 17 to proceed with the proposed building program.

In order to erect the parish house at the proposed site it was necessary to petition the court for permission to remove sixty-one bodies interred at the rear of the church.

On March 6, 1950 the Berks County Court was petitioned by a representation of both congregations, by their solicitor Ralph C. Body.

Prior to the hearing for removal permission as requested, it became necessary to ascertain whether or not any remains could be found of those interred at this spot.

In order to comply with this request, on Thanksgiving Day, November 23, 1950 before noon, Melvin W. Reichert, Charles W. Eckert Sr., Melvin Clemmer, Lester Y. Bechtel and Edmund Y. Bechtel representing both Hill Church Councils, proceeded to excavate to obtain the necessary information. This also proved to be the official ground-breaking for the new parish house. From observa-

tion of dates on tombstones on the graves in question it appeared that no interments had been made for a period of almost a century. As expected, no remains could be found.

With this information, and no objectors appearing before the Court, the requested permission was granted.

The records indicate that although permission was granted to move sixty-one graves approximately only twenty graves were moved to a plot located at the southeast corner of the church cemetery.

On Saturday, September 8, 1951, in the presence of several hundred people and under ideal weather conditions, the Cornerstone Ceremonies were conducted in accordance with the following program:

HILL UNION CHURCH
Boyertown, Rd. 1, Pa.

St. Joseph's Lutheran . . . Luther Lee Lengel, Pastor
St. John's Reformed . . . . John L. Herbster, Pastor

Organists: Mabel G. Dellicker and Raymond Albitz

Service for Laying the Corner-stone of the Hill Union Parish House

September 8, 1951

THE SERVICE

Hymn—No. 429
Invocation—Page 276
Responsive Psalm—Page 276
Scripture—Page 276
Apostle's Creed—Page 277
Hymn—No. 198
Sermonette.....Rev. Luther Lee Lengel
Sermonette.....Rev. John L. Herbster
Announcement of Articles in Corner-stone.....Charles W. Eckert, Sr.
The Prayer—Page 277
Corner-stone Laying—Page 277
Rev. Luther Lee Lengel
Rev. John L. Herbster
Lord's Prayer
Hymn—No. 241
Benediction

We rejoice in welcoming every one of you to our Corner-stone Laying

St. John's Reformed Consistory

Melvin N. Reichert, Lloyd R. Benfield, Frank N. Eshbach, Melvin H. Clemmer, Raymond D. Endy, Donald J. Endy, Clyde G. Weller, Charles R. Conrad, Morris B. Trace, John A. Dotterer, Mahlon Kulp, Walter Mest.

St. Joseph's Lutheran Council

Charles W. Eckert, Sr., Melvin H. Ehst, Harold W. Moyer, Clarence M. Yerger, Claude B. Rohrbach, Clarence S. Schlicher, Harvey Y. Moyer, Lester Y. Bechtel, Clarence C. R. Moser, Ernest Y. Seyler, Melvin R. Moyer, Herbert M. Reppert.

Reformed Building Committee

Melvin N. Reichert, Lloyd R. Benfield, John Dotterer

Lutheran Building Committee

Elmer J. Hausman, Charles W. Eckert, Sr., Claude H. Kemp

Architect

Charles M. Tally, Telford, Pa.

Contractor

Welsh and Renninger, Sanatoga, Pa.

Heating and Plumbing

Warren F. Smith, Boyertown, Pa.

Electrical Work

W. & R. Gehris, Gilbertsville, Pa.

Solicitor

Ralph M. Body, Yellow House, Pa.

LIST OF ITEMS PLACED IN CORNER-STONE AT HILL UNION CHURCH ADDITION SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1951

One (1) Holy Bible, bound in Morocco, wrapped in aeroplane cloth for protection.

One (1) Heidelberg Catechism, 20th Century edition of the Reformed Church.

One (1) Augsburg Catechism, current edition of the Lutheran Church.

One (1) Year Book for Year 1951, issued by St. Joseph's Ev. Lutheran Church for members.

One (1) Church Attendance Schedule of St. John's Ev. and Reformed Congregation for year 1951, Ziegel Reformed Charge.

One (1) Church Bulletin of St. Joseph's Ev. Lutheran Church for the "Festival of Harvest," dated September 2, 1951.

One (1) Church Bulletin of St. John's Ev. and Reformed Church for the "Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity," dated August 26, 1951.

Two (2) Programs of this Corner-stone Laying, September 8, 1951, one copy for each congregation.

One (1) United States Quarter Dollar dated 1951.

Two (2) United States Dimes dated 1951.

Four (4) United States One Cent pieces dated 1951.

One (1) United States Dime dated 1853, issued during year the third church was erected.

One (1) Bottle containing wine.

One (1) Bottle containing olive oil.

One (1) Bottle containing wheat, barley and corn.

The hammer and trowel used by Rev. Luther L. Lengel and Rev. John L. Herbster on this occasion were presented by Charles W. Eckert, Sr. After being duly inscribed these tools will be placed in the archives of the church for posterity.

When the present building program of the parish house had advanced to a point where it was felt that in order to carry on successful fund raising campaigns, and that a united effort was necessary among the membership to raise funds.

In order to combine the Lutheran laymen and laywomen into one great effort, suggestions were made for the formation of a Ladies' Aid Society, and a Brotherhood for the men of the church.

On June 20, 1951 the Lutheran Brotherhood was formed and the following officers were inducted into office:

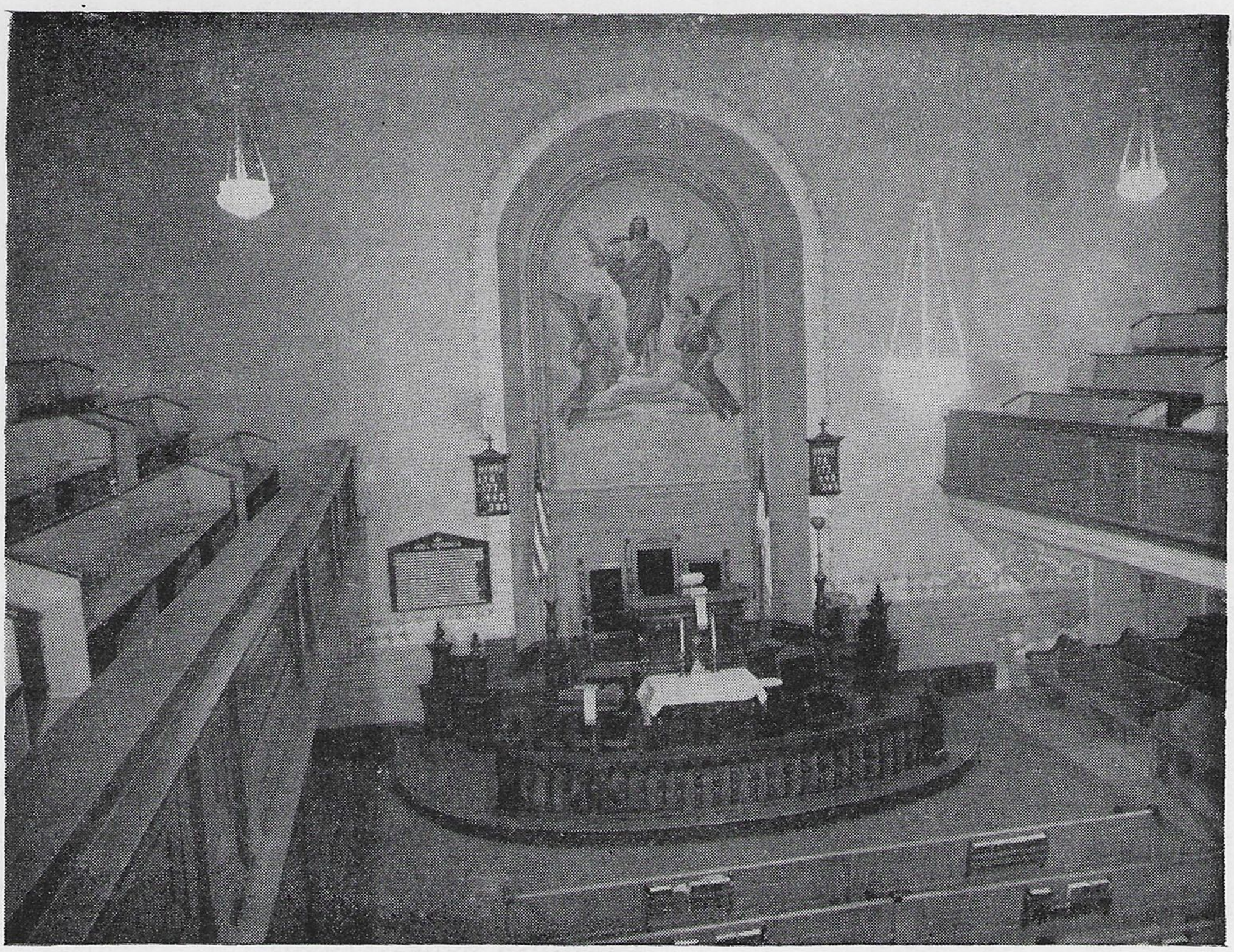
President.....Charles W. Eckert, Sr.
Vice-President.....Lester Y. Bechtel
Secretary-Treasurer.....Nelson A. Moyer

On October 14, 1951 the Ladies' Aid Society was formed with the following officers:

President.....Mrs. Betty Sturges
Vice-President.....Mrs. Charles W. Eckert, Sr.
Secretary-Treasurer..... Miss Francis Renninger

The dedication services of the parish house or Sunday School addition were conducted on October 17, 18 and 19, 1952 with appropriate addresses by prominent speakers from both congregations for the occasion.

The first church service was held in the new addition on Sunday, April 26, 1953 by St. Joseph's Hill Lutheran Congregation due to renovations and repairs to the church.



SANCTUARY—FRONT VIEW OF ALTAR AND CHANCEL OF CHURCH
PRIOR TO RENOVATIONS IN 1953.

On April 20, 1953 the contemplated repairs and renovations to the church were begun. The work was assigned to Welsh and Renninger, Contractors, who quoted $32,947.75 to complete the work. This undertaking was voluminous due to the entire dismantling of the interior of the church and replacement with all modern materials and equipment.

The organ was removed, rebuilt and re-installed by the Fritsche Organ Co. at their bid of $5,275.00.

The contract for new pews of colonial design was awarded to J. Reddington & Co. at their bid of $6,850.00.

Through the generosity and kindness of the various church organizations and many individuals, outstanding gifts and memorials were presented and are gratefully acknowledged by the Church:

The list of donors is as follows:

Church Chancel—by Confirmation Class of 1921, St. Joseph's Hill Lutheran Ch.

Carpet—by Ladies' Aid Society, St. Joseph's Hill Lutheran Church.

Chimes—by Mr. & Mrs. Melvin N. Reichert, St. John's Hill Reformed Church.

Church Pews—

In Memory of	*Presented by*
Rev. John W. Koch	Luther League, St. Joseph Hill Lutheran Church
Irvin M. Fronheiser	Family
Parents	Mr. & Mrs. Charles G. and Mabel Yoder
John Erb	Annie Erb Mr. & Mrs. William Strunk Mr. & Mrs. John G. Yoder { Mr. & Mrs. Clarence S. Schlicher Mr. & Mrs. Wilmer C. Schlicher { Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd K. Kline Mr. & Mrs. William G. Yoder
Pfc. William H. Moyer	Parents Mr. & Mrs. Carl B. Rohrbach Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Y. Bechtel & Family Women's Guild, St. John Hill Reformed Church
Raymond J. Endy	Widow
World War II Memorial	St. Joseph Hill Lutheran, St. John Hill Reformed Congregations
Sister Dora	Selena Moyer
Charles F. Reichert	Mr. & Mrs. Earl H. Reichert
Sara L. Engdert	Women's Guild, St. John Hill Reformed Church Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Ehst & Family Mr. & Mrs. Walter Mest Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Clemmer and daughters Janet and Anna
Elmer E. Conrad	Widow and Children Mr. & Mrs. Mahlon Kulp & Family Andora Heydt
Mr. & Mrs. William Brumbach	{ Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Kemp Mr. & Mrs. Warren Werstler Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Frey
Claude H. Brumbach	Widow
Mr. & Mrs. William R. Hoch	Annie D. & Selina D. Moyer Adult Bible Class

Appreciation to	*Presented by*
Ralph C. Body	St. Joseph Hill Lutheran Church, St. John Hill Reformed Church Congregations
George L. Brumbach	St. John Hill Reformed Church

The re-dedication services of the Church are scheduled to be held from Sunday, December 6th to December 13th, 1953, inclusive, with both congregations participating. Prominent speakers of both faiths will be in attendance and deliver addresses as follows:

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1953 — RE-DEDICATION SERVICE

Speakers

Rev. Lester E. Fetter, President, Reading Lutheran Conference

Rev. Paul E. Schmoyer, President, Lehigh Synod, Evangelical and Reformed Church

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1953 — SACRED CONCERT

Organist

Mr. Henry Hensinger

Speakers

Rev. Donald M. C. Englert, Ph.D., F. & M. College, Lancaster, Pa.

Rev. Edgar M. Cooper, Pastor, New Hanover Lutheran Church

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1953 — SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Speaker

Dr. Allen S. Meck, President, Theological Seminary of Evangelical and Reformed Church

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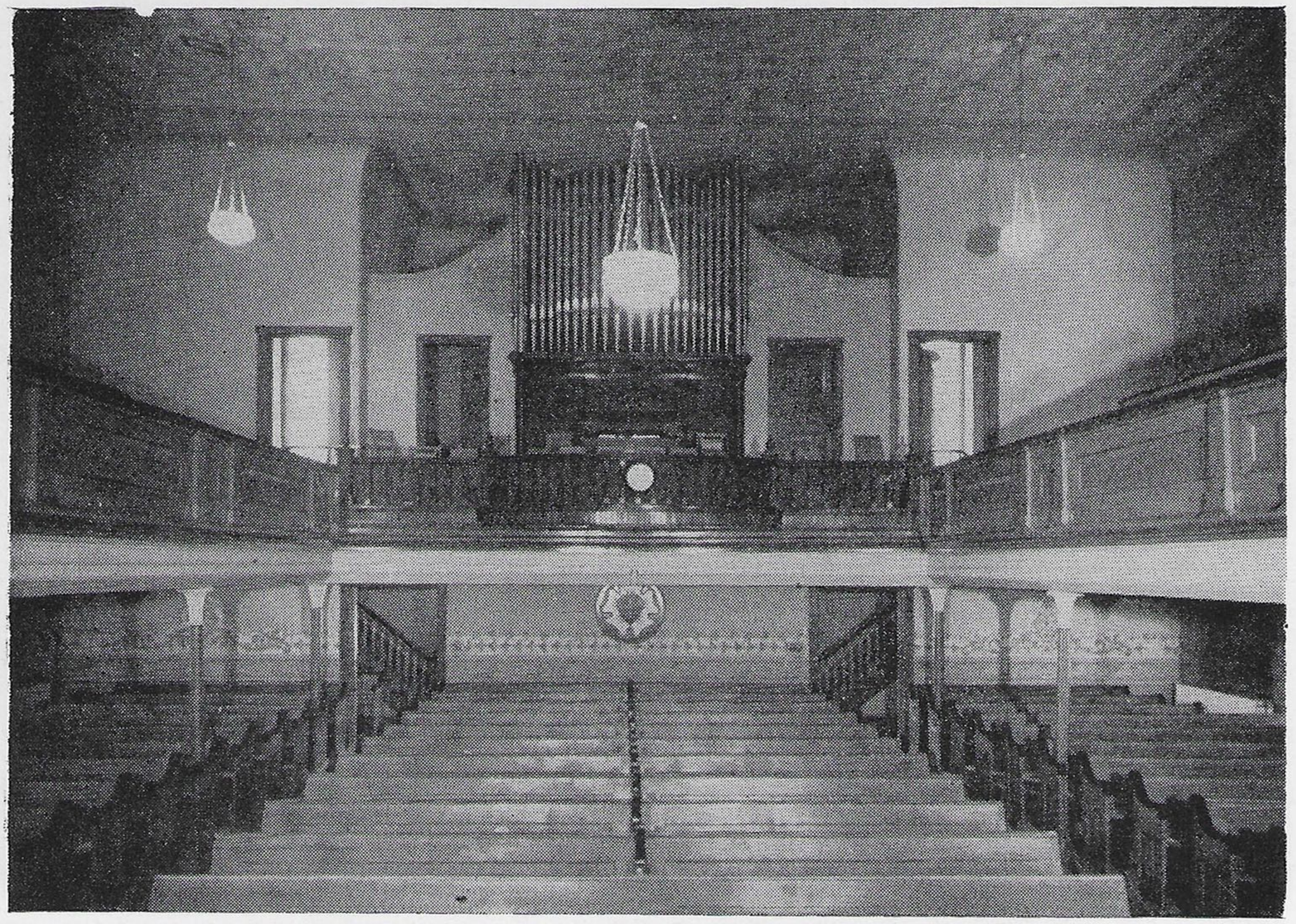
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1953

Speakers

Rev. Charles M. Cooper, Ph.D., President, Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania

Rev. James E. Wagner, D.D., President, Evangelical and Reformed Church



INTERIOR—REAR VIEW AND BALCONY OF CHURCH PRIOR TO RENOVATIONS

The Building Committee who so ably served on the Parish House addition also served in the same capacity on the rebuilding and renovation of the Church and their services are gratefully acknowledged by both congregations.

REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY

As previously stated our records show that the German Reformed Congregation became part owner of the church in 1785. Both congregations have labored diligently and harmoniously, side by side, in attempting to fulfill God's will for a period of over one hundred and sixty-eight years. This is a most enviable record for both congregations.

Reformed pastors who have served in Hill Church since the original inception in 1785. The main Reformed church at that time was at Oley, whose pastors supplied the following:

REV. F. DALLICKER, REV. J. W. INGOLD.....1790 to 1796
REV. J. H. FABER.....1797 to 1799
REV. FREDERICK HERMAN.....1800 to 1840
REV. LEWIS HERMAN.....1840 to 1859
REV. ROBERT VAN CORT.....1859 to 1864
REV. P. P. A. HOFFMAN.....1864 to 1890
REV. M. H. BRENSINGER.....1890 to 1891

Rev. H. A. I. Benner	June 1891 to Sept. 1892
Rev. M. H. Mischler	1893 to 1909
Rev. C. F. Bartholomew	1909 to 1927
Rev. W. E. Horstmeier	1927 to 1929
Rev. W. L. Meckstroth	1929 to 1933
Rev. Donald M. C. Englert	1933 to 1943
Rev. John L. Herbster	1943 —

Rev. Michael Schlatter, pioneer Reformed pastor and missionary, worked among the members of this congregation as early as 1746.

The present St. John Reformed Congregation worshiping in Hill Union Church was organized in Heydt's school house on June 2, 1894, by a committee of the German Philadelphia Classis, consisting of Revs. Vollmer and Dumstry and Elder Gross. On June 16, 1894, they became possessed of a portion of the St. Joseph Church property by purchase.

During the pastorate of Rev. P. P. A. Hoffman a difficulty arose among the congregations constituting the pastoral charge in consequence of which a division resulted.

Hill and Lobach's Churches constituted Rev. Hoffman's field. The Classis of Goshenhoppen realizing the insufficient support of the charge as now constituted, promised to strengthen the same by the addition of one or more congregations. This promise repeatedly made but never fulfilled led to the serious results indicated in the later history of the congregation.

After the death of Rev. Hoffman, Rev. Brensinger proposed serving the congregations in connection with his Fleetwood charge. This arrangement, although entirely satisfactory to the Hill-Reformed people, was disapproved by the Goshenhoppen Classis, which body entered complaint against Rev. Brensinger before the Lehigh Classis and compelled him to cease his service at once, not even permitting him to confirm catechumens whom he had been instructing for some time.

Rev. Benner now accepted a call from the charge with the distinct understanding that the Classis would strengthen the charge by the addition of another congregation. After serving for 16 months and finding that Classis did not propose keeping its promise, Rev. Benner resigned.

Rev. Mishler supplied the Hill charge by permission of the Goshenhoppen Classis. After continuing this agreement for one year, Classis demanded that he become a member of that body and confine his labors to Hill and Lobach's. Rev. Mishler offered to become a member of the Goshenhoppen Classis on condition that the Classis strengthen the charge by the addition of one or more congregations. This was refused by Classis, when unrest started brewing. As a result, late on Saturday evening May 5, 1894, the Classis of Goshenhoppen notified Rev. Mishler not to officiate at any service in the Hill Church anymore, threatening dire calamities if he did. Having a regular appointment at Hill

Church on Sunday, May 6, 1894, Rev. Mishler went there, stated the case and dismissed the congregation.

Later the congregation by a unanimous vote asked the Classis of Goshenhoppen to dismiss them to the German Philadelphia Classis. This request was refused and without the knowledge or consent of the Hill congregation Classis appointed Rev. I. S. Stahr, of Oley, as supply pastor. Rev. Stahr immediately announced services in the church and visited the larger part of the membership, doing all he possibly could to induce the small minority to fight with the large majority. His services were very poorly attended—18 at the first service, 12 at the second and 7 at the third, which were held under an apple tree.

The members of the congregation realizing that patience had ceased to be a virtue and that unless something was done the tyrannical domineering of the Classis of Goshenhoppen would lead to the destruction of the congregation, the following 20 persons asked to be dismissed and after the request was granted, petitioned the German Philadelphia Classis to organize them into a congregation:

William Brumbach
Jacob Weller
Abner Dotterer
William Dotterer
John Hinkle
William Weller
Jonathan Weller
Matthias Dotterer
Levi Gehris
William Sheeler
David Benfield
James Dotterer
William Dotterer
George Eshbach
Henry Weller
Wm. Weller, Jr.
Horace Weller
Joseph Dotterer
Wm. Moyer, Sr.
J. L. Dotterer

The Classis of Goshenhoppen made a desperate fight against the organization of this congregation, appealing the matter from Classis to Synod and from Synod to General Synod; but each decision rendered was against the Goshenhoppen Classis and in favor of justice and right.

On June 2, 1894 at 1:30 o'clock P.M. Rev. Vollmer, Rev. Dumstry and Elder Gross, representing the committee of the German Philadelphia Classis, met at Heydt's school house and organized St. John's Reformed congregation by the adoption of a constitution and the election and installation of the following officers:

Elders—William Eshbach, David Benfield
Deacons—Jacob Weller, James Dotterer

On June 3, 1894 a congregational meeting was held and the Consistory was instructed to meet the Consistory of St. Joseph's congregation and negotiate for the purchase of the right, title and interest of said congregation in the Hill Church property.

On June 16, 1894 the officers of St. Joseph's congregation appeared at our congregational meeting and reported that our offer to purchase their interest in the Hill property had been accepted by the congregation by a vote of 89 to 9. The deed was received and ordered to be filed in the Recorder's office, of Berks County.

Services were conducted in Heydt's school house on June 2, 3, 17, 1894, and again in th church on July 1, 1894, on this occasion the little congregation returned to its own home after an absence since May 6, 1894.

During this crisis the members of the congregation stood as one, the people in general seeing the injustice which was done stood by them and it is hoped that the experience has been helpful to the Classis of Goshenhoppen, teaching them to be more considerate in the future and to remember that our people will not submit to a continuous domineering over them.

The Hill Reformed Congregation remained in the German Philadelphia Classis of the old German Synod of the East until 1938, when it was joined to Ziegel's Charge of the Lehigh Classis.

WOMEN'S GUILD

The Women's Guild was formed on May 16, 1942. The first officers were:

President.....MRS. NEVIN HERBERT
Vice-President.....MRS. MELVIN N. REICHERT
Secretary.....MRS. HOWARD KLEINSMITH JR.
Treasurer.....MRS. MAGGIE FRONHEISER

The services rendered by this organization for a period of over eleven years to the church has been most commendable. Their outstanding gifts and services rendered to date are graciously acknowledged by the church.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Due to the lack of records we are unable to furnish a concise history of our Sunday School. It is presumed that its beginning dates back to shortly after the Great Rebellion (1861-1865). At the present time the average attendance is very close to three hundred and still growing. Through the generosity of the Sunday School several outstanding gifts have been made to the Parish House and church renovations.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
—I Corinthians 13:13